



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**National Drug Intelligence Center**

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**February 25, 2008**

Mr. Rick Henry  
WTAE-TV  
400 Ardmore Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER STORY  
AIRED FEBRUARY 15, 2008**

Dear Mr. Henry:

As the Director of the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), I feel compelled to respond to an investigative story that WTAE aired on February 15, 2008, concerning NDIC.

The story as presented by WTAE reporter, Mr. Paul Van Osdol, did not provide a fair and balanced representation of the NDIC role or its unique and valuable contributions to this nation's counterdrug strategy. Most disturbingly, Mr. Van Osdol's report failed to include any reference to the widespread acknowledgment of the NDIC value or success. Although specific details documenting significant accomplishments and valuable contributions of NDIC were provided to Mr. Van Osdol, not one was cited in the story. Highlighting the incompleteness of his report, Mr. Van Osdol chose to rely almost exclusively on two sources for this "investigative" piece. One source was a U.S. Senator from Oklahoma who has never visited NDIC nor provided NDIC an opportunity to brief him on our mission, projects, or accomplishments. The other source was a long-retired Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent who had served as a detailee at NDIC more than 12 years ago. Both of these sources present a negative opinion of NDIC, and Mr. Van Osdol failed to present or acknowledge any sources that hold favorable opinions of NDIC. It would have been relevant and presented a balanced and fair report to interview additional sources that state an opposing view. For example, Mr. Van Osdol could have interviewed Mr. John Counihan, who is also a retired DEA supervisor and who more recently retired and served as a detailee at NDIC. Mr. Counihan gave praise to NDIC in a recent letter to the local editor stating the following:

"What I read in or hear from the media about the National Drug Intelligence Center can only be characterized as either misinformation or disinformation. I speak with some experience, as I am a retired Drug Enforcement Administration supervisory special agent with 30-plus years of narcotic enforcement experience – almost seven (1997-2004) of which were an assignment by the DEA to the NDIC." and "The tedious and labor-intensive work of NDIC's

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employees, which results in comprehensive analysis of seized documents and electronic equipment (computers, cell phones, etc.), has proven invaluable to law-enforcement officers and prosecutors throughout the United States.”

Mr. Van Osdol should have reported the facts that NDIC recently received an award from the Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, for the 2007 Domestic Cannabis Cultivation Assessment and support of the 2007 cannabis eradication program. In a July 20, 2007, letter from the Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, the commendation stated that the report: “...broadened our awareness and appreciation for the incredible job your folks are doing”; “No other agency is doing this kind of strategic analysis...”; and gave thanks for “...the demonstrated expertise and dedication of your work force.” These are just two recent examples of testaments to the NDIC contributions. There are additional excerpts cited on our website from high-level policymakers attesting to the important contribution and role NDIC plays in our nation’s counterdrug strategy.

Mr. Van Osdol should also have noted the NDIC contributions to national security following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Immediately following the events of that day, NDIC deployed approximately 40 analysts to assist the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). This assistance to the FBI continued for 2 years. In a November 21, 2001, letter to the Deputy Attorney General of the United States, the FBI Financial Crimes Section Chief, Mr. Dennis M. Lormel, wrote: “Since 09/20/2001, the NDIC team, consisting of NDIC Intelligence Analysts and FBI Financial Analysts, has analyzed over 75,000 subpoenaed financial documents. Through the analysis of these documents, over 400 specific intelligence products have been produced for the FBI, the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury, and U.S. Attorney’s Offices. The work NDIC produces continues to initiate actionable leads and identify avenues of investigation. NDIC has integrated seamlessly with the FBI investigation and has enhanced the way the FBI will investigate future financial cases. The participation of NDIC in this investigation continues to be invaluable.” And in a follow up letter dated March 5, 2003, the FBI wrote: “As always, it is a pleasure to write to you, as it affords those of us within the Terrorist Financing Operations Section (TFOS) an opportunity to thank you for the continued exceptional assistance NDIC provides to the Counterterrorism Division here at FBI Headquarters.”

As the Director of our nation’s strategic drug intelligence center, I stress the importance that our analysts be thorough in their research and unbiased in their analysis. Failure to present and consider opposing perspectives and contradictory data in the production of strategic intelligence products is a failure to serve our clients, the nation’s policymakers and leaders in our counternarcotics strategy. Similarly, I expect complete and unbiased reporting, including the acknowledgement and presentation of opposing views from my news sources. I am disappointed that Mr. Van Osdol failed to live up to my expectations of a professional news reporter, as he clearly came to interview me with a preconceived notion of the facts and no desire to seek the truth.

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Finally, I was disappointed that Mr. Van Osdol failed to honor his word to provide NDIC with 24-hours advance notice for the airing of this story. NDIC demonstrated integrity and full disclosure during the contact with Mr. Van Osdol. By failing to honor his word, by failing to fully research the facts, and by failing to present any opposing views, it appears that Mr. Van Osdol failed to demonstrate the integrity expected of a news reporter. WTAE does not represent itself well when it permits such shoddy and biased reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael F. Walther', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael F. Walther  
Director